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Book Reviews

Effective Environmental Management: Principles and Case Studies

Sullivan, Rory & Wyndham, Hugh

Allen & Unwin, 2001, 246 pages, AUD\$49.95, ISBN: 1-86508-237-6

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This book deals with Environmental Management Systems (EMSs) from the perspective of practitioners. It aims to link the theory of how to implement EMS with the practical experiences from case study chapters provided by environmental managers in a cross-section of Australian industry and local government. Written by EMS practitioners, this book will be of interest mainly to business managers, directors and environmental managers intending to implement an EMS. Although some reference is made to the various international standards for conducting EMS, the book has a strong Australian focus.

The book is divided into three sections. Following a brief introduction, Chapters 2–4, written by Sullivan and Wyndham, introduce the theory of EMS. Seven industry case study chapters follow, which are written by personnel involved in EMS for the organisations featured. The last two chapters (12 and 13) by Sullivan and Wyndham draw together the overall lessons learnt and reflect on future directions for EMS.

The purpose of the book, which is clearly stated in the Preface and in Chapter 1, is to identify the key principles that must underlie any effective EMS. While the book overall achieves this goal, the book title is misleading as there is no consideration of environmental activities associated with other processes (e.g. environmental impact assessment or planning requirements). Furthermore, the

emphasis throughout the book is on the benefits to companies, in particular cost savings and improved standing with the community, as reasons for conducting an EMS. There is no discussion of effective environmental management from a biophysical perspective. It seems that the authors consider effective environmental management to be synonymous with effective business management.

Chapters 2 and 3 read very much like a manual on how to undertake an EMS and take a step-by-step approach to the process. Whilst presented in a clear and simple fashion, there are very few practical examples or references to previous work in this area. No connection is made between the theory of EMS and practice which requires the reader to take the authors' viewpoints at face value. The inclusion of more examples, or cross-references to subsequent examples in the case study chapters, would have been useful here. Chapter 4 provides a brief guide to the certification process for ISO14001.

The seven case study chapters represent a broad cross-section of organisations involved in a range of activities, such as mining, primary production, manufacturing, construction, electricity generation and local government. The authors were asked to describe how they developed and implemented their EMS with particular regard to driving forces, costs and benefits, and lessons learned. Sullivan and Wyndham indicate that the case study organisations were all selected because of their success in developing effective EMSs. All of the case studies involve large organisations; it would have been interesting if some small to medium sized companies had also been included.

There is a big variation in the case study reporting. For example, the chapter on ACTEW Corporation by Carl Thompson is largely a statement of advocacy for EMS and contains many motherhood statements. In contrast, through a series of tables, John Alexander provides useful insights into the development and workings of the EMS for ABB Engineering Construction. In the chapter on the construction company Abigroup, David Jenkinson includes a series of practical examples of specific environmental impacts and problems and how they were overcome. Other chapters focus more on the process of implementing EMSs for the organisation in question.

Despite the overall emphasis of the book on the economic benefits to organisations in implementing EMSs, there were no practical examples given of the cost savings that could be realised. In several case studies, the costs of employing consultants and other staff to implement an EMS were stated, but the benefits and cost savings referred to were never quantified. Inclusion of this information would have greatly strengthened the central message of the book.

The book is repetitious in places with some points being reiterated many times. For example, the importance of obtaining senior management commitment to an EMS is stated at least four times in Chapters 2 and 3, is noted in most of the case study chapters and is repeated in the evaluation of the case studies in Chapter 12.

Overall, the book brings together useful experience on how to implement an EMS. Less repetition of general points and greater specific details would improve the utility of the book for its target market of environmental managers, directors and students.